



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

richness of the offering, the wealth and contentment of the mind that can so think and feel.

What all this betokens is a personality perfectly integrated and therefore, as was always felt by those who knew Kilmer, happy and strong. In him, humor, piety, love, friendship, intellect, meet in a synthesis that one feels to be somehow new. In this personality, there seems to be no unhappy break with the past, no undue discontent with the present, no sense of homelessness, no apparent lesion of any kind. It accepts heartily the conditions that so many have found disturbing—modern life, this modern war of ours, everything—and adjusts itself to them. Not even the work of a hack-writer could embitter it.

What of his standing as a man of letters? It is idle to discuss the question of whether or not he was a genius. As a writer, perhaps not; as an avatar of young America, yes. Only a personality having the strength of genius could be such an orator—an average mind could not compass it. Kilmer's poems say just what they were meant to say, with convincing sincerity and sometimes with singular originality of phrase—the subtlest form of originality of thought. His verses, in all their intensity, are always as friendly and human as a hand-clasp. He will probably not go down to history, however, as a great poet in the sense either of a great word-master, or a great creator of verbal melodies, or as a great seer. What matter?

America will take Joyce Kilmer to her heart, not because he was a genius in any of the narrower senses, but because he was a prophesy.

CAN GRANDE'S CASTLE. By Amy Lowell. New York: the Macmillan Company.

In subtlety of suggestion, splendor of phraseology, and picturesqueness of imagery, surely most writing of the past, whether in verse or prose, must be regarded as drab and tame by comparison with Miss Lowell's polyphonic prose. And it would be mere folly to denounce as simply "precious" writing which has so many facets of simplicity and of art. The element of surprise due to the use of words and phrases in combinations that give them an entirely new luminosity; the rich, vari-colored effect of the whole, with its superposition of picture on picture and mood on mood, tempts one to believe that Miss Lowell has really developed a new and immensely powerful art.

Perhaps she has. Certainly, liberty is a great thing and not to be trammelled whether in verse or in thought. But without disapproving the tendency, one may raise certain queries as to its scope and effect.

The truth about free verse would seem to be—as, indeed, its adherents assert—that its defiance of scansion is nothing new. No one of course reads the line, "The quality of mercy is not strained," as it is scanned. But these lines and other lines of classic English poetry are measured—measured, it is true, according to some rather mysterious psychic law, but indubitably measured: we know whether the full number of feet in the line has been filled out even though we cannot without pain force our utterance to conform to the formal metrical scheme. And so what the free versifiers do is not so much to introduce

subtler rhythms than the older poets (barring the eighteenth century) used, as to abandon that measure which all the classic poets, writing by ear rather than by rule, used in order to give effect to the subtlety of rhythm which they actually achieved. In this view polyphonic prose seems less comparable to music without melody than to music without time. Whether more is gained than is lost by the method is a question not to be decided hastily.

But there is a larger question involved in the new art, a question that concerns the use of words not as to their rhythmical possibilities but as to their meanings.

Music makes use of symbols which suggest no ideas except as these arise through stimulation of the emotions, through mimetic adaptation, or through an arbitrary prearranged connection. Painting seems even less dependent upon concepts, the order of feeling it arouses being one stage farther removed from conceptual thought than are the emotions called up by music, which seems to owe a part at least of its power to its appeal to feelings that were originally promptings to action and are therefore not far removed from definite thought. But *words* mean things or concepts. To use them continually for the sake of their mere connotation, to adopt a style almost purely suggestive and largely ejaculatory, strains them from their natural function. Words make us think, and the polyphonic prose will not let us think. Instead of subtly availing itself as the older poetry did of the capacity of a little definite thought to support an immense amount of suggestion, the polyphonic prose constantly arouses and then represses the tendency to reflect coherently.

To be sure, some of the loveliest lines of poetry in the language are by no means valuable for what they denote:—

In Xanadu did Kubla Kahn
A stately pleasure dome decree,
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man,
Down to a sunless sea—

If there is more in the stanza than Coleridge's mood and vision, no critic has been able to find it. But Coleridge's words are led along in stately procession, their suggestiveness subdued to the formal decorum of ordinary, sane human thought. All Miss Lowell's words are straining at the halter.

So long as men incorrigibly use words to think with, will there not be something painful and unnatural to all but the most sophisticated minds—that is to all minds but those whose possessors have leisure and adaptability sufficient for the cultivation of artificial (though not necessarily reprehensible) tastes—will there not be something painful to most minds in an art which inclines toward ignoring the natural function of words?

Though it is dangerous to mark out limits for a new tendency, one may risk the conjecture that the good effect of the free-verse movement will be felt in its enrichment of matter-of-fact prose, and in its bringing to pass a more democratic sympathy, so to speak, between prose and poetry, than in its establishment of a new art to take the place of an old one.